



FASTING AND POWER
The Strategic Significance of the Fast of Ramandān

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Masjid Jāmi'ah, City of San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago

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First Published 2011

SŪRAH AL-KAHF: Quartet of Books

Volume 1: Sūrah al-Kahf: Text Translation and Modern Commentary;

Volume 2: Sūrah al-Kahf and the Modern Age;

Volume 3: An Islamic View of Gog and Magog in the Modern Age;

Volume 4: Dajjāl the False Messiah or Antichrist.

Published by

Masjid Jāmi’ah, City of San Fernando.

70, Mucurapo Street,

San Fernando.

Trinidad and Tobago

Cover design by

Alicia Heraz

Email: aliciaheraz@gmail.com

Printed in

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Preface

This book was formerly published some fifteen years ago with the title '*The Strategic Importance of the Fast of Ramadān and Isra and Miraj*'. We have now separated the two topics and are publishing them as two separate books.

We have changed the title of this book to *Fasting and Power* in an effort to direct greater attention to the central thesis presented, namely that the fast of *Ramadān* was sent down to deliver *power* to the Muslims. We have also edited and added to the original text.

Let us take the opportunity to remind those Muslims who do not regularly recite the Qur'ān in Arabic from-cover-to-cover, that Angel Gabriel ('alaihi al-Salām) came to the Prophet (sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam) every night during the entire month of *Ramadān* and he would have to recite for the Angel all that was revealed in the Book up to that time. He completed the whole recitation during the month of Ramadan every year. However in the last year of his life he recited the whole Qur'ān (i.e., all that was revealed in the Book up to that time) twice for the Angel.



If the reader has never so far recited the whole Qur'ān from cover to cover we urge him or her to start to do so without delay. And when he or she is finished – to then start again, and when he or she is finished – to then start again! In particular we urge that the recitation of the Qur'an be commenced at the beginning of every month of Ramadan and be completed once or twice before the end of the month.

Finally we pray that this book may be blessed to play a role in mobilizing Muslims in such a way that the fast of *Ramadān* may actually result in that input for *power* being achieved individually and collectively, which may then find concrete expression on the battlefield of *Jihād* as Islām responds to barbaric oppression in the Holy Land in particular. *Āmīn!*

There must be something special about Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur that I should be blessed to complete the writing of a book yet again in this city in blessed *Ramadān*.

Imran N. Hosein
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Ramadan 1432/August 2011



The Imperative of Power

The Muslim world must be reminded that the Qur'an has ordered Muslims to build power with which to deter enemies:

﴿ وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُم مَا أَسْتَطَعْتُم مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ
يَهُوَ عَدُوُ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوُّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنَّتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ



"Hence, make ready against them whatever power and war mounts (i.e., military equipments) you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of Allah, who are your enemies as well, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, (but) of whom Allah is aware; and whatever you may expend in Allah's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged."

(Qur'an, al-Anfāl, 8:60)



Prophet Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) is reported to have warned that “each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be questioned concerning his flock of sheep.” If a shepherd does not possess the knowledge required for rearing sheep he may not know where he should take the sheep to graze. When the sheep begin to stray he may not know how to go after them and bring them back into the flock. And when the wolves begin to circle the sheep, he may not know how to protect the sheep. Indeed there are Muslim shepherds in North America who are innocently leading their sheep directly to the wolves. Such are the Muslim leaders who engage in amateur *Ijtihād* and who then pronounce that bank interest is not *Ribā* (usury) and hence *Halāl*. The situation in the world of Islam is even worse. There are many Muslim countries today where the shepherds have been dismissed and wolves are ruling over the sheep!

The present book is written primarily for the benefit of the shepherds of the Muslim community around the world. It is our hope and prayer that they will subject it to careful and critical attention, *Insha' Allah*, and that it may be of benefit to them. *Amīn*.

The Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) also said that Islam was built on a five-fold foundation. Amongst these five “pillars” is the fast of *Ramadān*. In this paper an attempt is made to demonstrate how the fast of *Ramadān* functions as a “pillar” or a “foundation” of the house of Islam, rather than just a “window” or a “door.”



More than fifty thousand Muslim women in Bosnia in Europe were raped and ravaged in the age of *Pax Americana* by bitter enemies of Islam who behaved like a pack of mad dogs. Concentration camps housed Muslim men in Bosnia. Muslims were starved to death. Sarajevo was relentlessly bombarded for more than two years. The world witnessed genocide in Srebrenica when in July 1995 some 8000 Muslim Bosnians – men and boys – were slaughtered by Serbian Armed Forces under the command of a Serbian general.

The Muslims of Kashmir have been brutally oppressed and terrorized for more than fifty years, ground to the very dust by more than half-a-million Indian armed forces that are now allies of Israel in the newly emerging *Pax Judaica* (that is replacing *Pax Americana*). Kashmiri women, like their counterparts in Bosnia, suffer the same rape in the broad daylight of history from those who have very clearly identified themselves as unrelenting enemies of Islam and Muslims.

In Palestine, Muslims have suffered such extreme oppression at the hands and feet of racist Euro-Jewish Zionist colonizers, and have been reduced to such a weak and helpless situation that they were forced to resort to an *intifada* of stones!

What has the world of Islam done about Bosnia, Kashmir, Palestine, the NATO occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and so many other bleeding stab wounds on the body of the *Ummah*? Muslims around the world have been agonizing while their Excellencies, Majesties, Royal Highnesses, Presidents, Prime



Ministers and Ministers of Government who rule over the Muslims, went home, had dinner, and went to sleep! Even sincere Muslim leaders have simply been too weak to do anything more than protest the hypocrisy of the West and the indifference of fellow Muslim leaders.

The Muslim world must be reminded that the Qur'ān has ordered Muslim to build power with which to deter enemies:

﴿ وَأَعِدُّوْ لَهُم مَا أَسْتَطَعْتُم مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ
بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعُدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا نَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُؤْفَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴾



“Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of Allah, who are your enemies as well, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, [but] of whom Allah is aware; and whatever you may expend in Allah's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.”

(Qur'ān, al-Anfāl, 8:60)

Muslims have also been ordered to respond to aggression:

﴿ أُولَئِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ يَأْنَهُمْ ظُلْمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ
الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيْنِهِم بِغَيْرِ حَقٍ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَا
﴾



دَفْعُ اللَّهِ الْنَّاسَ بَعْضُهُمْ يَعْصِي مَهْرَبَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبَيْعُ وَصَلَوةٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ
 يُذَكِّرُ فِيهَا أَسْمَ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَنْ يَنْصُرُ هُوَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَإِنَّهُمْ
 أَلَّا رَكُونَةَ وَأَمْرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلَلَّهِ عَنِّيَّةُ الْأَمْرِ

﴿٤١﴾

“Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged and, verily, Allah has indeed the power to succour them...” “Those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying: “Our Sustainer is Allah!” For, if Allah had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques – in [all of] which Allah’s name is abundantly extolled – would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And Allah will most certainly succour him who succours His cause: for, verily, Allah is most Powerful, Almighty, [well aware of] those who, [even] if We firmly establish them on earth, remain constant in prayer, and give in charity, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; but with Allah rests the final outcome of all events.

(Qur’ān, al-Hajj, 22:39-41)

And they have been ordered to liberate the oppressed:



﴿ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقْبِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْرِجَالِ وَالنِسَاءِ
وَالْوَلَدِينَ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرِيبَةِ الظَّالِمُونَ أَهْلُهُمْ وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا
مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴾ ٧٥

“And how could you refuse to fight in the cause of Allah and of the utterly helpless men and women and children who are crying, “O our Sustainer! Lead us forth [to freedom] out of this land whose people are oppressors, and raise for us, out of Thy grace, a protector, and raise for us, out of Thy grace, one who will bring us succour!”

(Qur’ān, al-Nisā 4:75).

In the process of building power and using power for performing such functions, Muslims would create conditions which would facilitate the recognition of the Truth of Islam by non-Muslim humanity:

﴿ وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الظَّابِئَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ كَمْ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ
السُّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحَقِّقَ الْحَقَّ بِكُلِّمَتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ
الْكُفَّارِينَ ٧٨ لِيُحَقِّقَ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرُومُونَ ﴾

“And, lo, Allah gave you the promise that one of the two [enemy] hosts would fall to you: and you would have liked to seize the less powerful one, whereas it was Allah’s will to prove the truth to be true in accordance with His words, and to wipe out the last remnant of those who denied the truth, so that He might prove the



*truth to be true and the false to be false, however hateful
this might be to those who were lost in sin.*

(Qur'ān, al-Anfāl 8:7-8).

How do we restore power to the *Ummah*? What is the Qur'anic view of *power*? Is wealth a foundation of *power*? If it were, then the rich peoples' army would not have been defeated by the army of the refugees at *Badr*! Are weapons the foundations of *power*? If they were then the well-armed force of the *Quraish* would not have been defeated by the lightly-armed Muslims at *Badr*! Nor would a super-power, the United States of America, have been defeated in Vietnam.

What, then, are the foundations of *power*? Wealth, and weapons technology (including nuclear weapons), and the strength of numbers, are all important to *power* but do not constitute the foundations. Our understanding is that the foundations of *power* are located in freedom, knowledge, values, faith, unity (and fraternity), discipline and leadership.

For example, the Muslim Community under the direct leadership of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) was not given permission to fight until they had *power*. But permission never came while they were still in Makkah. It came only after the *Hijrah* to Madinah and only after the conclusion of the Treaty (*Mīthāq*) of Madinah which gave to them political freedom. That political freedom assured for them the freedom to submit, individually and collectively, privately and publicly, to the supreme authority of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'alah*).



Today that freedom has been lost. Muslims are now obliged, even in the so-called Islamic Republic of Iran, to submit to the supreme authority of enemies of Islam who control the Security Council of the United Nations Organization. That is the implication of membership in the Zionist-created United Nations Organization.

But of greater importance to us in the context of this essay is the realization that a Muslim cannot pursue an effort for restoring external freedom unless he first has achieved internal freedom. Only that Muslim is truly internally free who lives for Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'alah*). Everything he does, he seeks to please Allah Most High. It matters not whether the world is pleased or displeased with him. What the world thinks of him is irrelevant to how he determines the life he should live. Only such a Muslim is free! Most Muslims alive today in the modern world of *Dajjāl*, have become slaves of the worldly life i.e., *al-Duniyah*. Some are slaves of their US Passports, Visa, Green Cards, etc. Others have become slaves of their jobs or businesses which give them a comfortable life. As a consequence of that enslavement they lack the freedom to wage a struggle against injustice and oppression even within the world of Islam.

The Qur'ān has delivered a very stern warning to such Muslims:

﴿ قُلْ إِنَّ كَانَ أَبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْرَجْنَكُمْ وَأَرْجَمْكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتْكُمْ ﴾



وَأَمْوَالٍ أَفْرَقْتُمُوهَا وَيَخْرُجُونَ مُخْسِنَةً كَسَادَهَا وَمَسْكُنًا تَرْضُونَهَا
أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُم مِّنْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَجْهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرْبَصُوا حَتَّىٰ
يَأْتِيَكُمْ اللَّهُ يَأْمُرُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَسِيقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

“Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that ye have gained; the commerce in which ye fear a decline: or the dwellings in which ye delight – are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving in His cause; then wait until Allah brings about His decision: and Allah guides not the rebellious.”

(Qur’ān, al-Tauba, 9:24)

Fasting is one of the most effective institutions for realizing that freedom. It is of crucial importance that we reflect upon the fact that the fast of *Ramadān* was not imposed upon the Muslims until just before the battle of *Badr* when they had to fight for the first time! That timing was not by accident!

In a *Hadīth Al-Qudsi*, Allah Most High has declared:

“Fasting is for Me, and I will respond to it with any reward (howsoever great) I choose to bestow.”

The lesson here is so simple and yet so powerful. If we can fast for Allah it opens the way for us to live for Allah and for Allah alone, regardless of the price we may have to pay. Only those who live for Allah would die for Allah; and therein is located the foundations of power.



Thus, what this essay does, most of all, is to provide for the discerning reader a glimpse of how the fast of *Ramadān* contributes towards the individual and collective realization of all the foundations of power.

We must enter a note of warning concerning the increasing number of secularized Muslims who are emerging in our midst who are either careless and indifferent with regards to the fast of *Ramadān*, or who do not consider it necessary to observe the fast at all. Such Muslims should understand, before it is too late, that it is in the nature of the secular society to dilute, to weaken, and to eventually render irrelevant, the distinction between the Truth (*al-Haq*) and falsehood (*al-Bātil*), that which is permitted by Allah (*al-Halāl*) and that which is prohibited by Allah (*al-Harām*), between conduct which is virtuous (*al-Ma'rūf*) and conduct which is sinful (*al-Munkar*).

Without being fully aware of it, the secularized Muslim eventually lives a life which is in no way moulded and conditioned by the rewards of Heaven (*al-Jannah*) and the punishments of Hell (*Jahannam*). Indeed, secularized Muslims eventually lose consciousness of what is *sin*.

In the secular society it is not the word of Allah Most High which is the measure (*al-Mizān*) of all things. Rather man positions himself at the centre of his universe, and he becomes the measure of all things. He determines what is *right* and what is *wrong*. His *reason* sits in judgment on anything which claims to be the Word of Allah. And when the Word of Allah does not



appear to conform to man's rational predilections then the word of Allah must either be rewritten, or rejected or, worse, subjected to a *progressive interpretation!* This is called the secularization of religion. And this is the terrible fate which has befallen Judaism and Christianity in the modern western civilization, and this fate arrived at the very doorstep of the Muslims when European Judeo-Christian armies colonized the world of Islam at the very point of a zealot's sword.

This fate was inevitable for Jews and Christians because they had distorted the revealed Truth. But it would be inexcusable for Muslims because the revealed Truth in the Qur'ān is protected by Allah Most High Himself. And the basic understanding of that Truth is located in the explanations provided by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah Most High be upon him), in his personal example (*Sunnah*), and the model of a sacred society which he created!

In order to protect themselves from being completely absorbed and integrated into the new sophisticated secular *Jāhiliyyah* (i.e., ignorance of Truth revealed by Allah), such secularized Muslims should make haste to learn the lesson that Islam presents to humanity an alternative model of life and of society, a model which is a rival to today's secular model. In Islam's sacred model of living, this world acquires meaning only with reference to that transcendental world from which emerges *Al-Haq*, *Al-Halāl* and *Al-Ma'rūf*.

When we understand how *this* world relates to *that* world then *this* world, also, becomes sacred. Life becomes sacred. And



woman becomes sacred i.e., for men. Only then can we fathom the status of woman in the sacred model of life. We can then respond to the challenge posed by the secular model which, in naïvely seeking to liberate woman, is presiding over the greatest destruction of the peace and happiness of women ever witnessed in history.

Through fasting we enhance our state of harmony with the sacred life and the sacred world! The sacred life is a life which is lived for the purpose of pleasing Allah Most High. That is the way we should live. That is the road to power.

We pray that the reader may benefit from the information and analysis presented here and, in particular, that secularized Muslims who have stopped fasting may be persuaded to return to the life of the sacred and to the institution of fasting which does so much to remind us of the unseen world and to fortify us with the values which come from that unseen world. Without values the only future mankind can expect is one of unhappiness and frustration, and tragedy after tragedy!

May Allah accept our humble service in the cause of His Revealed Truth – Truth which can bring peace and contentment, fulfilment and success to otherwise barren lives, as well as to the now-collapsing social order.



Fasting in Islam – Its Basic Objective

In Sūrah al-Baqarah¹ of the Qur’ān Allah Most High addressed those who believe in that scripture as Divine revelation and informed them of the promulgation of the compulsory fast for them. The verse then disclosed that fasting was made compulsory for all those religious communities which preceded the community of Muslims who follow Prophet Muhammad (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*).

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴾ ١٨٣

“O you who have attained to faith! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of Allah.”

(Qurān, al-Baqara, 2:183)

Thus the compulsory fast is found in the religious life of Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhist and others.² The verse then ended by indicating that the objective for which the compulsory fast was promulgated is the acquisition of piety



and godliness (*Taqwa*).

The Qur'anic viewpoint therefore, is that fasting has always been an obligatory feature of the religious way of life. By instituting the compulsory fast for the religious community which followed Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah Most High be upon him), the Qur'an simply brought religious life amongst Muslims into a state of conformity with an essential requirement of the religious way of life.

When the Qur'an went on to point out that the basic objective of fasting was the acquisition of piety and holiness (*Taqwa*), it followed that this must also have been the basic objective of fasting in all previous religious communities established by the thousands of Prophets and guides sent by Allah Most High to every nation and tribe (Qur'an, al-Ra'd, 13:7).

An immediate implication of this conclusion is that no religion (which claims to be founded on the One Truth) can or should condone the exploitation of the institution of fasting as a political weapon or a form of protest. And yet, in 1986, the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, who was a Catholic priest, completed three weeks of a fast-unto-death in a protest against the policies of the government of the United States of America towards the Sandanista government in Nicaragua. In much the same way the Indian leader, Mohandas Gandhi, who was a devout Hindu and a role-model of modern reform Hinduism, used fasting as a political weapon in his struggle against British rule in India.



Piety and godliness, therefore, is the criterion with which we judge the institution of fasting as it functions, not only in the religious community established by Nabi Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*), but in all other religions and religious communities.

It is only when fasting inculcates piety and godliness that it functions in accordance with its original purpose. When it does not or, rather, no longer does, then a deviation has occurred. And it behoves the followers of the deviant religion to struggle to retrieve the original objective of fasting.

While the majority of Muslims, the world over, observe the compulsory fast of *Ramadān*, we find in this age the unique phenomenon of large numbers of Muslims who do not fast. When we inquire into this phenomenon what we find is that it has emerged almost exclusively as a result of a considerable impact of modern Western civilization on such Muslims.

This is not surprising since modern Western civilization, which is largely constructed on secular and materialistic foundations, does not attach much practical value to piety and God-consciousness. As a consequence one comes across people who find it inconvenient to fast because it interferes with the efficient fulfilment of their professional obligations. Indeed a former President of Tunisia attempted to prohibit the compulsory Islamic fast because he claimed that it had a negative impact on productivity and thus constituted an obstacle to economic growth and prosperity. Others who have imprisoned themselves in the comforts and luxuries of modern



sensate culture (which is a feature of Western rather than Christian civilization) find fasting to be either too rigorous or just plain inconvenient. While we shall be attempting a rational exposition of the benefits to be derived from fasting, we should also urge such Muslims to take serious note of the fact that fasting was made compulsory by Allah Most High Himself.

Any Muslim who challenges the compulsory fast and holds the view that he is under no obligation to fast would be in a state of defiance and rebellion against Allah; and since Islam connotes *submission* to the Will of Allah Most High, it should be obvious that such a person would not be in Islam, in the true sense of the word, and hence would not be a Muslim.

Indeed, such a Muslim places himself outside the religious way of life altogether since the Qur'ān declares:

﴿ وَمَن يَبْتَغِ عَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَسِيرِينَ ﴾

الْخَسِيرِينَ

“And whosoever desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted from him. and in the life to come he shall be among the lost.”

(Qur'ān, aal-'Imrān, 3:85)

On the other hand, the Muslim who recognizes the obligatory nature of fasting and yet does not observe the compulsory fast because of laziness, inconvenience, or



whatever reason is, in fact, committing a sin and must expect to be punished by Allah Most High for it. Similarly, since fasting was made compulsory for those religious communities which preceded the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*), and since the previous divinely-revealed laws of fasting were cancelled and abrogated and then replaced in the Qur'ān with the Fast of *Ramadān*.

﴿ مَا نَسْخَحُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ تُنسِهَا فَأُتْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا أَأَنْ تَعْلَمُ
أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ ١٦

*“Any message which, We annul or consign to oblivion
We replace with a better or a similar one. Dost thou not
know that Allah has the power to will anything?”*

(Qur'ān, al-Baqarah, 2:106)

It follows that the followers of those religions will also incur Allah's punishment if they, too, fail to observe the compulsory fast of *Ramadān*.



Fasting and Internal Spiritual Power

Taqwa possesses both a moral and a spiritual dimension. In respect of its moral dimension it connotes moral rectitude which is the fruit of a Divinely-grounded vigilance, on the one hand, and the purification of the heart (Tazkiyah) on the other. Moral rectitude manifests itself in acts of commission (Awāmir) and omission (Nawāhi), i.e. performing virtuous acts required by the moral code such as “giving alms to the poor,” on the one hand, and refraining from evil acts (also prohibited by the moral code) such as acts of bribery and corruption on the other. Allah Most High declared in the Qur’ān:

﴿ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّهَا ١٠ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّهَا ﴾

“Whosoever purifies (the nafs) has achieved success. And whosoever corrupts it has failed.”

(Qur’ān, al-Shams, 91:9-10)

The implication of these verses of the Qur’ān is that values must be recognized as one of the foundations of power. Indeed, there is a specific confirmation of such an implication in the chronological sequence of the revelation of the Qur’ān.



After the migration from Makkah to Madinah had been effected, and shortly after victory over the Quraish at Badr, Allah Most High revealed the Sūrah entitled *al-Anfāl* (the Spoils of War) in which He recalled the road which had been travelled:

﴿ وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَنْخَطَّفُوكُمُ النَّاسُ فَئَاوَدُكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الظَّبَابِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشَكُّرُونَ ﴾٦﴾

“Call to mind (that time) when you were a small (band), weak, helpless (and vulnerable) in (your) territory, and afraid that (hostile) people would finish you off. Then (Allah) provided you with (a way to) safety and refuge, and empowered you with His aid, and provided you with wholesome resources that you might be grateful.”

(Qur’ān, al-Anfāl, 8:26)

The power to which Allah Most High referred was of course internal spiritual power, which was manifest in the battle of Badr. And the manifestation of that power was of such strategic importance in the Divine scheme that Allah went on to describe it as the *Furqān*, or criterion, through which truth was distinguished from falsehood:

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَثْقُلُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرُ
عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴾٦٩﴾



“O you who have attained to faith! If you remain conscious of Allah, He will endow you with a standard by which to discern the true from the false, and will efface your bad deeds, and will forgive you your sins: for Allah is limitless in His great bounty.”

(Qur’ān, al-Anfal 8:29)

He also declared:

﴿لِيَحْقُّ الْحَقُّ وَبُطْلَ الْبَاطِلُ وَلَا كُرْهَةَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴾
8

“That it (the demonstration of power) might serve to confirm Truth and expose falsehood, distasteful though it be to those in guilt.”

(Qur’ān, al-Anfāl 8:8)

What is of critical importance for our topic is the fact that Allah Most High chose a moment shortly before the month of *Ramadān*, in which the battle of *Badr* was fought, to reveal the verses of the Qur’ān which promulgated the compulsory fast of *Ramadān*. It should be clear as daylight that the fast of *Ramadān* was instituted at that specific time that it might function as a means through which the community might be empowered. If not, how can we possibly explain the more-than 14 years long delay in promulgating the institution of fasting? Would it not have been beneficial to the oppressed Muslims of Makkah to have been given the fast of *Ramadān*? Would it not have enhanced their fortitude to resist the *kuffār*?

The fact that Allah Most High waited for more than



fourteen years, after the commencement of the revelation of the Qur'ān, to reveal the verses relating to the compulsory fast of *Ramadān*, is a direct indication of the relationship which exists between fasting and power.

There is a link between fasting and power. The link is that fasting not only builds, but also, reinforces and consolidates values, and values form an indispensable foundation of power. Also, since no nation, society or civilization can ever rise to greatness without establishing and sustaining the moral health of its people, it follows that the institution of fasting in religion plays a role of crucial importance in nation-building and in the process of establishing a healthy and enduring society and civilization. In fact the Qur'ān goes beyond this to claim that survival, in the historical process, depends upon moral health. It does so when it declares (as mentioned earlier) that:

﴿فَدَّأْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّهَا﴾

“Those who purify themselves and permit the proper growth and development of their moral being will succeed (in history as well as in the Divine scheme of things). Those, on the other hand, who corrupt themselves and, in the process, obstruct the growth and development of their moral being, will eventually perish.”

(Qur'ān, al-Shams, 91:9-10)

This holds true as much for the social order, the nation, and civilization, as for the individual.



The Qur'ān does not merely state this thesis as a fact; it does more than that. It seeks to demonstrate the validity of the thesis by inviting attention to the historical process at work in the rise and fall of nations and civilizations. And in order to facilitate that inquiry it narrates the history of certain nations and tribes which perished because of moral corruption consequent upon the collapse of values.



Religion and the State

The very survival of a nation or civilization is dependent on the establishment and preservation of values and the development of moral health. Religion, through its belief system of the transcendental world, is the only source of eternal values. There are no such things as secular values. Religion, also, through such institutions as fasting, has a glorious record of achievement in the moral struggle. As a consequence there is an essential linkage between religion and the State, a linkage which the State can only ignore at its own peril.

The modern nation-state, built on the dual foundations of secularism and nationalism, is incapable of redefining secularism in such a way as would permit religion to function as an effective moral force in the establishment of a healthy social order. Similarly it finds itself increasingly incapable of transcending narrow nationalisms to embrace a conception of the unity and fraternity of all mankind in order that it may be able to digest the claim of religion that moral values are not only universal and absolute, but require a non-discriminatory



application amongst the many different peoples in the world.



Morality and Religion

Although moral rectitude is an essential dimension of *Taqwa*, we should note that it does not function as an end-in-itself, nor does it function independently; rather it depends on a metaphysic and serves goals which are essentially transcendental. It is the spiritual dimension of *Taqwa* which is really dominant. This is clear from the opening statement of the second chapter of the Qur'ān which declares that the Qur'ān provides (consequential) guidance for those who possess *Taqwa*. It then goes on to identify the constituent elements of *Taqwa* and singles out, as first in importance, belief in the unseen transcendental world (*al-Ghaib*). Next comes the establishment of continuous communion with Allah Most High through regular prayer (*Iqāmah al-Salāt*) and through spending freely to assist the needy and under-privileged with the recognition of wealth as a gift from Allah Most High (*Infāq*). *Taqwa* requires belief, not only in the Qur'ān, but also in all other revealed religious scriptures. And since the Qur'ān does not name all those scriptures, the true religious way of life cultivates respect for all religious scriptures in the world which claim a Divine origin, and requires belief in those



scriptures to the extent that one can recognize Truth in them. And then the last constituent element of Taqwa is unshakable faith in a life hereafter (*al-Ākhirah*):

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَعْمَلُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمَا رَزَقَهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآ

﴿ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَإِلَّا لِتَرَكِمَ هُوَ يُوقَنُونَ ۚ ٦١﴾

“And who believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon thee, [O Prophet,] as well as in that which was bestowed before thy time: for it is they who in their innermost are certain of the life to come!”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:3-4)

Taqwa is therefore initially dependent on the recognition that this world in which we live is not the only world. There is another world beside and beyond this world. Indeed, in comparison with that world, which is permanent and abiding, this world is temporary, transient and fleeting:

﴿ وَمَا هَنِئُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوَ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهُمْ

﴿ الْحَيَاةُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ۖ ۶۴﴾

“... for, [if they did, they would know that] the life of this world is nothing but a passing delight and a play – whereas, behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew this!”

(Qur’ān, al-Ankabūt, 29:64)



It will not last forever. It will one day come to an end and be transformed by its Creator into another world which will be quite different from this one:

﴿ يَوْمَ تَبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ عَيْنَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ ۚ وَبَرَّوْا لِلَّهِ الْوَحِيدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴾



“[His promise will be fulfilled] on the Day when the earth shall be changed into another earth, as shall be the heavens and when [all men] shall appear before Allah, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists.”

(Qur’ān, Ibrāhīm 14:48)

Taqwa is dependent on the recognition that human beings will survive their physical death and will, upon the transformation of the world, be roused from the slumber of their graves to be subjected to accountability for their conduct.

That day of accountability will witness the truth of all that religion stood for, and hence it is called “the Day of Religion” (*Yaum al-Dīn*). On that day Allah Most High will sit in Judgment over humanity and will reward and punish as appropriate. Heaven exists for reward while hell exists for punishment.

Finally *Taqwa* is dependent on belief in the transcendent unity of religious Truth (*al-Dīn*) since it requires belief in all divine scriptures and in all the Prophets. There can only be One Truth since Truth is God, and God is One! This belief in the unity and universality of Truth engenders a spirit of profound



respect for “Truth” which is located in a religious community and scripture other than one’s own – even if it be a mere remnant of the Truth!

When we study the history of the evolution of religion what we find is that at its earliest stage religion was basically concerned with the organization of society and the rules of conduct conducive to the emergence of moral consciousness. This appears to be the basic purpose fulfilled in the story of Nabi Ādam and his wife *Hawwa* (Eve) in the Garden of Paradise. The historical record indicates that symbolism played a significant role in the pursuit of both these objectives. Mythology was, perhaps, a failure to understand the true meaning of religious symbolism.

At the next stage, religion concentrated on the development of a religious psychology conducive to the proper growth and development of moral consciousness.

At a still higher stage religion turned man’s attention away from this world to an almost exclusive devotion of things mystical and otherworldly.

In its final form, however, with the revelation of the Qur’ān, it matured to deliver the simultaneous growth and development of the physical, social, moral, aesthetic and mystic dimensions of human consciousness. The conception, however, of a life hereafter, of accountability, and of worship of a single Deity who was both immanent and transcendent, always formed part of religious truth even when it was only



implicitly stated. This was the ‘substance’ of Truth.

The final standpoint of religion regarding man’s earthly life is that it should not be lived as an end-in-itself. Rather believers were required to live in this world in the manner of a traveller who is continuously conscious of the fact that his destination lies in the next world.

Living for the next world implies, in fact, living for Allah Most High And this brings us to yet another way at which the Qur’ān looks at *Taqwa*. Religion, it would appear, evaluates all human conduct on the basis of what will ‘reach’ Allah and what will not. It is only the ‘substance’ of religion which reaches Allah. Thus the Qur’ān declares:

﴿لَن يَنالَ اللَّهُ تُوْمَهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنالَ اللَّهُ الْنَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ
سَخَرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَيْتُكُمْ وَبَشِّرُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾



*“It is not the flesh and blood (of the animals of sacrifice)
which reach Allah. Rather it is the Taqwa of your hearts
which reaches Him”*

(Qur’ān, al-Hajj, 22:37)

And thus the basic objective of fasting is nothing less than the penetration of the very substance and soul of religion. The *Taqwa* which the believer acquires while fasting is, therefore, something which reaches Allah Most High. But before this can be achieved the human self must travel on a road which



progressively elevates it from the physical, to the rational and moral, and finally to the spiritual dimension of its existence.

It must, first of all, come to grips with the purely carnal self (*Nafs al-Ammārah*). This rebellious “wild beast” in man has to be tamed and disciplined. And fasting is one of the most effective means of controlling it.

It is in sexual immorality that the wild beast in man is at its wildest and most destructive and for this reason religion uses fasting for a direct attack on lust and carnal passion. This is achieved in Islam though the prohibition of sexual relations during the period of the fast each day and then virtually recommending sexual relations during the night which follows the day of fasting:

﴿أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَاءِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ
وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عِلْمٌ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ مُخْتَالُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا بَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ وَكُلُّوا وَاشْرُبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ
مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الْآتِيلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنِّكُفُونَ
فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تَذَكَّرُ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرِبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ مَا يَبِينُ
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَقَوَّلُونَ ﴾



“It is lawful for you to go in unto your wives during the night preceding the [day’s] fast: they are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them...”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:187)

The partners would thus bring to bear on their sexual conduct the moral and spiritual refinement acquired during the day of fasting.

As the self turns away from such unbridled fulfilment of all the demands of the *wild beast* in man such as adultery and fornication (*Zina*), and turns towards that which can reach Allah Most High, it is filled with regret for its past conduct and reproaches itself in this respect.

This stage in the development of the self is termed *Nafs al-Lawwāmah* by the Qur’ān. Finally, as the self purifies itself and turns to Allah Most High, it acquires *Taqwa* which reaches Allah *ta’ālah*. This is the stage of the beatified self (*Nafs al-Mutma’nnah*). This, indeed, is the stage of spiritual excellence and it is here that religion really exists.

Throughout history the beatified self has merely tolerated its own existence in this world. It really lived in a world which transcended this world. Thus, *turning away* from the mundane towards the sacred, away from the spatio-temporal towards the transcendental, has been the fundamental objective of all religions. However the Qur’ān did not permit a complete ‘*turning away*’ from this world. Rather it transformed this world into a sacred world. It transformed sex into something



sacred. Work, also, became something sacred. The believer was expected to live fully in this world and to strive to make a success of his life in this world. There was no incompatibility between living *in* this world and living *for* that world!

One cannot, however, really embark upon a journey through which the true consciousness of living *for* that world can be nurtured without mobilizing the ascetic element in human nature. Fasting, with its denial of that which is otherwise lawful, provides the perfect *entreeé* to the ascetic life and this, in turn, provokes the turning of the face to Allah Most High.

Our conclusion is that *power* cannot be sustained without values. And values all emerge from Truth! Therefore values cannot be established or sustained without religion. For it is religion, and religion alone, which can provide the metaphysical or spiritual belief-systems which make the moral quest possible!

When Muslims fast they should be constantly conscious of the fact that religion is at work building and sustaining values which, in turn, permit *spiritual power* to be established and preserved. *Spiritual power*, in turn, plays a critical role in the movement of history since time and again it validates Truth. (*Qur'ān*, al-Anfal, 8:8). History cannot end until *spiritual power* reasserts itself in the Last Age (*Akhir al-Zamān*) to validate Truth in Islam in a manner that is final and conclusive.



Fasting in Islam – Laws and Linkages

The compulsory fast of Islam is to be observed during *Ayyām Madūda* (a fixed period of time):

﴿ أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَمْرِضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ ﴾

﴿ أَيَّامٍ أُخْرَى وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ، فِدَيَّةٌ طَعَامٌ مُسْكِينٌ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا ﴾

﴿ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ، وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ ١٨٤

“[fasting] is during a certain specific number of days...”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:184)

and the Qur’ān identifies this fixed time as the lunar month of *Ramadān* in the *Hijri* calendar:

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ ﴾

﴿ مِنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَيَصُومُهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ

﴿ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخْرَى يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ ﴾

﴿ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْأُثُرَ وَلَتُكَمِّلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلَتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا



هذلکم و لئلکم شکوت ﴿١٨٥﴾

“It was the month of Ramadān in which the Qur’ān was [first] bestowed from on high ... Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it...”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:185)

The compulsory fast commences when the new crescent moon of *Ramadān* is visible, or when the month of *Shabān* (which precedes *Ramadān*) has completed its thirtieth day, whichever is first. The fast is observed daily from dawn to sunset. During this time one must refrain from eating or drinking anything. One must also refrain from sexual intercourse. After the sun has set and the daily fast has ended, one may partake of food and drink, and may engage in sexual relations. The month-long fast ends when the new crescent moon of *Shawwal* is visible or the month of *Ramadān* has completed its thirtieth day, whichever is first.

In the very process of instituting fasting with an imperishable link with the lunar month – a span of time determined by nature – of which Allah Most High is the author, the Qur’ān provides a built-in mechanism in religion which safeguards against the process of the secularization of time.

The Qur’ān itself claims that it was revealed in the month of *Ramadān*, and this was so momentous an occasion that the believers were required to fast for the entire month in order to show their gratitude to Allah Most High. And so Islam forged an imperishable link between the revealed scripture (the



Qur'ān) and fasting. Now this is a matter of great importance for, as we have already noted, the goal of fasting is *Taqwa* and *Taqwa* ‘reaches’ Allah Most High. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, is an unbroken link between man and Allah Most High. It is the Word of Allah Most High and hence possesses the Divine quality of uncreated eternity. Yet it exists in a living human language (Arabic) and is thus readily accessible. The Qur'ān is, therefore, a rope from Allah by holding on to which man can either ascend to Allah, or be drawn to Allah:

﴿ وَاعْصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَإِذْ كُرُوا يَعْمَلُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَالَّذِينَ قُلُوبُكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ يَنْعَمُونَ إِلَغْوَنَا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَاعَةٍ حُمْرَقٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَانْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مَا يَنْهَا لَعْلَكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴾



“And hold fast, all together, unto the rope of Allah, and do not draw apart from one another...”

(Qur'ān, ālu-'Imrān, 3:103)

In the secular society the fast of *Ramadān* plays the strategically important role of restoring the consciousness of the existence of the unseen world and of the revelations which have been sent from that world as guidance for mankind. Once such Divine revelations are accepted by man, he is obliged to submit to them.

We are also informed that the Qur'ān was revealed (or sent down) on a single night in *Ramadān*, namely the ‘grand night’



or the ‘night of power’ (*Lailatul Qadr*). Now this is a matter of tremendous importance. *Ramadān* is the month of the compulsory fast, and *Ramadān* is also the month in which is located the night when the Qur’ān was revealed. That night is the night of power. There is, therefore, a clear link between fasting and power, a link determined by Allah Most High Himself Who chose *Ramadān* for the compulsory month-long fast. Our view is that the power of that holy night is actually spiritual power. And Allah Knows best!.

Historically, however, it is clear that the Qur’ān actually reached the Prophet (through the medium of the archangel Gabriel) in bits and pieces over a period of twenty-three years. The explanation for this appearance of contradiction is that when Allah said that He sent down the Qur’ān in *Ramadān*, what He meant was that the Qur’ān was sent down to the lowest heaven (*al-Samā al-Dunya*) in *Ramadān* during the “night of power.” Indeed, it still exists there where its verses (*Ayāt*) adorn the lowest heaven as lamps:

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَبِّيحٍ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيْطَينِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ

عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ

“And, indeed, We have adorned the Samā nearest to the earth with lights...” (a Samā is a world of space and time that is located beyond/beside/parallel to the material universe)

(Qur’ān, al-Mulk, 67:5)



Like all the other revealed scriptures, the Qur'ān is described as a *light* from Allah Most High and therefore each verse of the Qur'ān is a “light”:

﴿فَإِنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالثُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرٌ﴾
8

“Believe then, [O men,] in Allah and His Apostle, and in the light [of revelation] which We have bestowed [on you] from on high! And Allah is fully aware of all that you do.”

(Qur'ān, al-Taghābun, 64:8)

It was, therefore, from the lowest heaven that the angel Gabriel brought the Qur'ān piecemeal to the heart of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) over a period of twenty-three years. The first revelation came to the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) on the ‘night of power’ when he was meditating in the Cave of Hirāl Allah Most High chose to give to the night of the first revelation the name ‘night of power’. He could have named it the night of ‘Truth’, or of ‘Peace’, or of ‘Deen’. He did not! Since He named it the ‘night of power’, the implication is that the Qur'ān contains within it that through which *power* can be acquired! We thus have linkages between fasting and *power*, and between the Qur'ān and *power* - i.e., *spiritual power*!

In the establishment of a direct link between the month-long compulsory fast of *Ramadān* and the continuous recitation and study of the revealed scripture (Qur'ān), religion has, in fact, reached a stage in its development never reached before. No other religious community was ordered to fast for as long a



period as one month of every year. Nor was fasting so organically linked to the recitation of the revealed scripture in any previous religious community.³ Not only do Muslims recite the Qur'ān while fasting but, in addition, they perform during the nights of *Ramadān*, the prayers of the “night vigil” (*Qiyām al-Lail* or *Tarawīh*) in which the entire Qur'ān is sometimes recited. This recitation, like all others in *Salāt*, is always performed in the original Arabic text of the Qur'ān.

Although the Qur'ān recognized that other religious scriptures also possess “light” (Qur'ān, al-Mā'ida, 5:47-49), and hence can be used in conjunction with fasting for achieving spiritual mobility, a major problem exists since people are seldom in a position to recite their scriptures in the original language in which they were revealed, and in which language alone they possess ‘light’. Such scriptures no longer exist in their original language, and when they do, the language is either dead or archaic and hence not readily accessible to the believing masses. Only a very tiny fraction of Christians today have ever read the Hebrew Bible, for example.

In a very real sense, the Qur'ān is, perhaps, the only revealed scripture which is readily accessible today to the overwhelming majority of those who believe in it, accessible, that is, in the original language and text in which it was revealed. This supports the claim of the book to be the revealed Word of the One and only God!



Link with Judaism

Ramadān is the month of collective spiritual retreat for the entire community of Muslims. They are permitted to eat and drink until the *white thread* of dawn is distinct from the *black thread* (i. e., until the whiteness of the day is distinct from the darkness of the night) and must then abstain from drink and sex until sunset:

﴿أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الْرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَاءِكُمْ هُنَّ لِيَاسٌ لَّكُمْ
وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْهَا بَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ وَكُلُّوا وَأَشْرِبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ
مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الظَّلَلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَذَّاكُفُونَ
فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلَكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرِبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُءَاءَ يَأْتِيهِ
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَوَّنُ﴾



“...and eat and drink until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night, and then resume fasting until nightfall...”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:187)

Prior to the revelation of the Qur’anic verses relating to fasting, Muslims fasted without taking an early morning meal. Ibn Abbas (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) has commented on those Qur’anic verses as follows:

“When the people offered the night prayer, they were asked to abstain from food and drink and (intercourse with) women. They kept fast till the next night.”

(Sunan Abu Dawood, Kitab Al-Siyam)

This was the way that the Jews and Christians fasted, for the Prophet (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) has said:

“The difference between our fasting and that of the recipients of previous scriptures (Jews and Christians being specifically referred to) is eating shortly before dawn.”

(Mishkāt Al-Masābih, Kitab Al-Siyam)

The implication of the *Hadīth* is that Jews and Christians fasted without a morning meal, i.e., their fast commenced after the evening meal and continued until the following sunset. In all other respects their fast for a day was similar to the Muslim fast.

With the revelation of the new *Shari'ah* (Sacred Law) the Muslims were now required to fast from dawn to sunset for the entire month of *Ramadān*. They were specifically permitted to take a morning meal and were specifically permitted to go to their wives during the nights of fasting:

﴿أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الْرَّفِثُ إِلَى نِسَاءِكُمْ هُنَّ لِيَاسٌ لَكُمْ
وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عِلْمَ اللَّهِ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا بَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَبَأْتُمُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ وَكُلُّوْا وَأَشْرِبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ
مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الْيَلِيلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَذَّقُوهُنَّ
فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ثُمَّ كُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَغْرِبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُءَاءِ آيَتِهِ
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَوَّنُ﴾

"It is lawful for you to go in unto your wives during the night preceding the [day's] fast: they are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them. Allah is aware that you would have deprived yourselves of this right, and so He has turned unto you in His mercy and removed this hardship from you. Now, then, you may lie with them skin to skin, and avail yourselves of that which Allah has ordained for you, and eat and drink until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night, and then resume fasting until



nightfall; but do not lie with them skin to skin when you are about to abide in meditation in houses of worship. These are the bounds set by Allah: do not, then, offend against them – [for] it is thus that Allah makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain conscious of Him.”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:187)

This change from the previous law of fasting to the new (as well as other such changes) is referred to in the Qur’ān as *Naskh* (abrogation or supersession):

﴿ مَا نَسَخْ مِنْ ءَايَةٍ أَوْ نُنْسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا أَلَمْ
تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

“We do not abrogate any Ayah (revelation) or cause it to be forgotten but (that) We (replace it) with that which is superior to it or similar to it.”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:106)

No verse of the Qur’ān itself was ever abrogated, and since revelation came down declaring that religion had been perfected, it follows that no abrogation of the Qur’ān at any time in the future is possible. Abrogation was always with reference to previous revelations. Secondly, when a previous *Shari’ah* law was abrogated in the Qur’ān the abrogation applied to all of mankind. Hence that abrogated law lost its operational validity for those previous communities who



followed it.

In the chronological sequence of the revelation of the Qur'ān there appears to be a direct link between the revelation of the verses relating to the promulgation of the fast of *Ramadān*, on the one hand, and the relations between Muslims and Jews (as well as Christians) on the other.

It is significant that fasting was not made obligatory on the Muslims during the thirteen years which were spent in Makkah prior to the *Hijrah*. Yet we know that the verses of the Qur'ān pertaining to fasting had already been sent down to the lowest heaven on the *night of power*:

﴿إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ﴾

“Behold, from on high have We bestowed this [divine writ] on Night of Power.”

(Qur'ān, al-Qadr, 97:1)

It was therefore on the basis of deliberate Divinely-ordained chronological sequence that this particular revelation (and all other revelation) was sent down at the time when it was sent down.

The point we are about to argue is that the chronological sequence, as it pertains to fasting, was clearly determined by the Jewish attitude towards the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his message. Consider the following events.

On arrival in Madinah, after the *Hijrah*, the Prophet



(*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) did two things which were profoundly significant for Christians and Jews.

Firstly, he performed his prayers (*Salat*) while facing in the direction of Jerusalem, and ordered all his followers to do likewise. The Jews held Jerusalem to be their Divinely-ordained spiritual capital and hence it became the direction to which they turned in prayer (*Qiblah*). The Christian attachment to Jerusalem was no less profound. In turning towards their *Qiblah* in prayer, the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) dramatically impressed upon the Jews and Christians that he worshiped of the same one God whom they worshiped. He also directed dramatic attention to his link with the following:

- ❖ his link with the Prophets David and Solomon ('*alaihim al-Salām*) who, as Prophet-Kings, had established the holy city of Jerusalem;
- ❖ his link with the Temple built by Solomon; and
- ❖ his link with the Rock (*al-Sakhrah*) which Jews and Christians held to be sacred because of their belief that it was associated with the momentous sacrifice of Abraham ('*alahi al-Salām*).

Our analysis is that this act of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) was supposed to facilitate their assessment and acceptance of his claim to be the Prophet about whom both Moses and Jesus ('*alaihim al-Salām*) had spoken. But Allah Most High knows best!



It is also interesting to note that Europe as well, developed mysterious obsessive bonds with Jerusalem and the Holy Land and that those mysterious bonds are now taking mankind to a disaster that will end all disasters. Those mysterious bonds caused a European Pope (all Popes are mysteriously European) to launch European crusades or Holy Wars to wrest control over Jerusalem from Muslims.

Secondly, he fasted with the Jews on the days when they fasted and in accordance with the Law of Fasting in the Torah. Thus, as stated earlier, the fast commenced after the night prayer and did not end until the next night. And during the time of fasting, food, drink and sexual relations were prohibited.

The Jewish law can still be located today in the Torah where, in respect of The Day of Atonement (*YoumKippur*), it states as follows:

“It shall be as Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial (i.e., fasting); on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your Sabbath.”

Levitcus (23:26-32)

The decision by the Prophet to fast with the Jews served to reinforce the previous decision (to pray in the direction of Jerusalem) in impressing upon the Jews in Madinah (and Christians in Palestine, Syria, South Arabia, and Abyssinia) that he worshiped the same God that they worshiped and that he



recognized the Torah as Divine revelation.

Our assessment is that this act of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) was also supposed to facilitate Jewish assessment and acceptance of his claim to be the Prophet for whom they were, in fact, waiting. But Allah knows best!

Fully seventeen months elapsed, after the arrival of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) in Madinah, before the Jewish rejection of the Prophet and their open animosity towards him (as well as Islam and the Muslims) became manifest. The event which triggered their open hostility, and which exposed in public what was concealed in their hearts for some time, was the conversion to Islam of their learned Rabbi, Abdullah Ibn Salaam (*radiallahu 'anhu*).

Abdullah Ibn Salaam had come with his entire family to the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and had taken the *Shahadah*, thus recognizing Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) as the awaited Messenger of Allah whom the Jews were expecting. In doing so he affirmed that Allah Most High had chosen, as His final messenger, one who was not a Jew. The implication of this was that Allah Most High, in His final chapter of revealed Truth, had chosen a prophet from the seed of Ishmael rather than Isaac. With the acceptance of the Prophethood of Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) by their own learned Rabbi, the moment of bitter truth had arrived for the Jewish people. In the act of accepting Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) as a true Prophet like onto Moses and Abraham ('alaihim al-Salam), their Rabbi, Abdullah bin Salām, implicitly admitted that the



Torah contained lies. (See our book entitled: ‘*The Religion of Abraham and the State of Israel – A View from the Qur’ān*’.)

It was indeed a bitter Truth, and it confirmed Allah’s stern warning when He established His Covenant with Abraham (‘alaihi al-Salām). They were warned that if they engaged in wicked conduct they would lose their covenanted status and as a consequence Prophets would no longer emerge from their seed. Here is what the Qur’ān has to say about that event in which Allah Most High established His Covenant with Abraham (‘alaihi al-Salām) making him the *Imām* or leader of mankind:

﴿ وَإِذْ أَبْتَلَنَ إِبْرَهِيمَ رَبِّهُ بِكَلْمَتٍ فَأَتَمَهُنْ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمَنْ دُرِيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَتَأَلَّ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾ ١٢٤

“I will make thee an *Imām* (leader) to mankind”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:124).

When Allah Most High spoke these words to Abraham (‘alaihi al-Salām) he responded by asking whether *Imāms*/Prophets would also arise from his seed:

“and also (*Imams*) from among my offspring!”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:124).

Allah Most High responded by implicitly confirming that Prophets would emerge from Abraham’s seed, but He went on to warn that His Covenant would exclude those whose conduct was wicked:



“My Covenant will not include the wicked (from your offspring).”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:124)

By the time of the birth of Nabi Muhammad (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) the majority of the Jewish people had committed numerous acts of wickedness, and Allah Most High recounted in the Qur’ān some of those acts of wickedness:

﴿ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الْطُورَ يَمْسِقُهُمْ وَقَنَّا لَهُمْ أَدْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجْدًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبَتِ وَأَخْذَنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيشَقًا عَلَيْظًا ﴾ ١٥٤ فِيمَا نَقْضُهُمْ مِيشَقُهُمْ وَكُفَّرُهُمْ بِثَائِتِ اللَّهِ وَقَاتَلُهُمُ الْأَنْيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلُهُمْ قُلْبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا كُفَّرُهُمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا فَيْلًا ﴾ ١٥٥ وَبِكُفَّرُهُمْ وَقَوْلُهُمْ عَلَى مَرِيمَ بُهْتَنًا عَظِيمًا ﴾ ١٥٦ وَقَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّا قَنَّلْنَا مُسِيَحًا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرِيمَ رَسُولًا اللَّهُ وَمَا قَنَّلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شَيْءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَخْلَقُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا أَبْنَاعُ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَنَّلُوهُ يَقِينًا ﴾ ١٥٧ بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴾ ١٥٨ وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَبِ إِلَّا لَيَوْمَنَ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴾ ١٥٩ فَيُظْلَمُ مَنْ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَمَنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَبِيبَتِ أَحْلَتْهُمْ وَبَصَدَّهُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴾ ١٦٠ وَأَخْذَهُمْ أَرْبَابُوا وَقَدْ نَهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلُهُمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَطْلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِهْمَمًا



“...We commanded them: Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath,” and we took from them a solemn covenant. (They have incurred divine displeasure) in that they broke their Covenant; in that they rejected the signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers (of Allah) in defiance of right; that they said: “Our hearts are enfolded in covers (which preserve Allah’s Words – We need no more); nay, Allah has set a seal on their hearts because of their blasphemy, and little is it they believe; that they rejected faith; that they uttered against Mary a terrible false charge; that they said (in boast) “We killed the Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah ... Because of the wickedness of the Jews We have made unlawful for them (many) good things which previously had been lawful for them. (We have done this also) because they obstructed (and led astray) so many from the Path of Allah. And (because) they took usury (Ribā) although they were prohibited from doing so; and because they cheated people of their wealth...”

(Qur’ān, al-Nisa 4:154-161)

It was because of that wickedness which had defiled the descendants of Isaac (*‘alaihi al-Salām*) that Allah Most High had to turn to the descendants of Ishmael (*‘alaihi al-Salām*) for the last Prophet. Abdullah Ibn Salām (*radiallahu ‘anhu*) was able to swallow pride and embrace the Divine verdict against the Jews when he



recognized Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) as the Prophet of Allah. The Qur'an affirms that the Jews, also, were all able to recognize that which their Rabbi affirmed:

﴿ الَّذِينَ إِاتَّبَعُوكُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فِرِيقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾
١٤٦

“The people of the Book know this (that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) as they know their own sons”

(Qur'an, al-Baqarah, 2:146)

What they could not swallow was the fact that he was not a Jew but an Arab. Had he been a Jew they would have accepted him. Although this, also, was not certain, since both John and Jesus were Israelites, and they were both rejected.

When Abdullah Ibn Salām (*radiallalhu 'anhu*) took the *Shahadah* and recognized Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) as the Prophet of Allah, he asked the Prophet to conceal the information until the Jews had been questioned concerning his status. The Prophet acceded to his request and kept the information secret. He then questioned the Jews concerning Abdullah Ibn Salaam. They replied: “He is our Rabbi, the most learned and respected of us all.” Then Abdullah came before them and announced that he had recognized Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*), the Arab, as the Prophet of Allah. The Jews responded by cursing their Rabbi and insulting him. They poured out all their pent up and concealed hatred for the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). They resorted to such tactics of

deception against the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) to which even pagan Makkah had never resorted. They sent some of their Rabbis to feign conversion to Islam so that they could penetrate the ranks of the Muslims and plant from within their ranks the seeds of doubt and suspicion concerning the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). They also sent a young Jew to recite the events of the Day of *Bu'ath* when the Aws defeated the Khazraj. The youth performed so well that he succeeded in arousing the old tribal passions and very soon the two tribes were facing each other ready for armed conflict.

It was the timely intervention of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) which averted what would have been a great tragedy. Allah responded to Jewish acts of wickedness, including the targeting of Muslim solidarity described above, with revelations which condemned them in very harsh language. We quote the Qur'ān at length so that readers may study these verses and so clearly recognize the great divine anger against the Jews:

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ
يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا
بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ ﴾٦٩﴾
يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَأْءُوهُ بِعَذَابٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكُفَّارِ عَذَابٌ



مُهِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ إِنَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا
 أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقاً لِمَا مَعَهُمْ
 قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْنُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١﴾
 وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ أَخَذَنَا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
 وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا أَخَذَنَا مِيقَاتَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوَّقَكُمْ
 الظُّورَ خُدُوا مَا أَتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا
 وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ الْعِجْلَ يَكُفَّرُهُمْ قُلْ
 بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ
 لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةٌ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا
 الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُ
 أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَنَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَخْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى
 حَيَاةٍ وَمَنِ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوْمًا أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعْمَرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةً وَمَا هُوَ
 يُمْرَحِّبُهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾
 مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوا لِجَنَاحِيلٍ فَإِنَّمَا نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقاً
 لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدَى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوا

إِنَّهُ وَمَاتِيْكَيْتَهُ، وَرَسُولِهِ، وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَنَلَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ
 لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ مَا يَعْلَمُ بَيْنَتِيْنِ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا
 إِلَّا الْفَسِيقُونَ ﴿٧﴾ أَوْ كُلُّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا تَبَدَّهُ فِرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بَلْ
 أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨﴾

And whenever there came unto them a [new] revelation from Allah, confirming the truth already in their possession – and [bear in mind that] afore-time they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth: whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it. And Allah's rejection is the due of all who deny the truth. Vile is that [false pride] for which they have sold their own selves by denying the truth of what Allah has bestowed from on high, out of envy that Allah should bestow aught of His favour upon whomsoever He wills of His servants: and thus have they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, over and over. And for those who deny the truth there is shameful suffering in store. For when they are told, "Believe in what Allah has bestowed from on high," they reply, "We believe [only] in what has been bestowed on us" – and they deny the truth of everything else, although it be a truth confirming the one already in their possession. Say "Why, then, did you slay Allah's prophets afore-time, if you were [truly] believers?" And indeed, there came unto you Moses with



all evidence of the truth – and thereupon in his absence, you took to worshipping the [golden] calf, and acted wickedly. And, lo, We accepted your solemn pledge, raising Mount Sinai high above you, [saying,] “Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and hearken unto it!” [But] they say, “We have heard, but we disobey” – for their hearts are filled to overflowing with love of the [golden] calf because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth. Say: “Vile is what this [false] belief of yours enjoins upon you – if indeed you are believers!” Say: “If an afterlife with Allah is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people, then, you should long for death – if what you say is true!” But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead in this world: and Allah has full knowledge of evildoers. And thou wilt most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people, even more than those who are bent on ascribing divinity to other beings beside Allah: every one of them would love to live a thousand years, although the grant of long life could not save him from suffering [in the hereafter]: for Allah sees all that they do. Say [O Prophet]: “Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel” – who verily, by Allah’s leave, has brought down upon thy heart this [divine writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tiding for the believers: “whosover is an enemy of Allah and His angels and His message-

bearers, including Gabriel and Michael, [should know that,] verily, Allah is the enemy of all who deny the truth.” For, clear messages indeed have We bestowed upon thee from on high; and none denies their truth save the iniquitous. Is it not so that every time they made a promise [unto Allah], some of them cast it aside? Nay, indeed: most of them do not believe.

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:89-100)

Allah Most High also warned the Prophet (sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) and the Muslims concerning the Jews:

﴿ وَإِنْ أَحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَأَحَدُرْهُمْ أَنْ يَفْسِدُوا عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَوْلُوا فَاعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ أَنْ يُصِيبَهُمْ بِعَيْضٍ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ لَفَسِقُونَ ﴾٦١﴾ أَفَمَحْكُمُ الْجَاهِلَةَ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنْ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقَنُونَ ﴾٦٢﴾

“Hence, judge between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what Allah has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views; and beware of them, lest they tempt thee away from aught that Allah has bestowed from on high upon thee. And if they turn away [from His commandments], then know that it is but Allah’s will [thus] to afflict them for some of their sins: for, behold, a great many people are iniquitous indeed”.



Do they, perchance, desire [to be ruled by] the law of pagan ignorance? But for people who have inner certainty, who could be a better law-giver than Allah?

(Qur'ān, al-Māida,5:49-50)

It was shortly after this, in the month of *Shabān* in the year 2 A.H., after the Muslims had prayed in the direction of Jerusalem for seventeen months, that Allah Most High sent down the revelation ordering the Muslims to pray in the direction of the Ka'aba in Makkah. Allah ta'ālaah explained the purpose of the change in *Qiblah*, that the whole question of the orientation in prayer was intended by Him to sift the true believers from the apostates and those engaged in deceptive conduct:

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِنَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونُونَ أَرْسُولٌ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِتَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِنَ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكِبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾



“And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you. And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction



between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all but those whom Allah has guided aright. But Allah will surely not lose sight of your faith – for, behold, Allah is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace.

(Qur'ān, al-Baqarah, 2:143)

And it was in that same month of *Shabān* (just one month before *Ramadān*) that Allah Most High also revealed the verses which promulgated the compulsory fast of *Ramadān* for the Muslims.

Henceforth whenever a Muslim turned in prayer towards Makkah instead of Jerusalem, and fasted from dawn to sunset during the month-long fast of *Ramadān* rather than from sunset to sunset as prescribed in the Torah, his direction of prayer and his new fast symbolised his separation as a Muslim from the community of Jews with which Muslims had previously combined in a single *Ummah*.

The institution of *Naskh* (i.e., divine abrogation and cancellation of revelation and its replacement with that which is better or similar) was used to create a new religious community with a separate identity from the communities of Jews and Christians. Hence every *Ramadān* should witness a renewal of Muslim resolve to recover and preserve their own



Muslim identity separate and different from Jews and Christians and from the rest of mankind. Modern western civilization has done everything it could possibly do to try to destroy that separate Muslim identity. The western weapon used in that attack is the secular model of society. Nothing has been more frustrating for Singapore, for example, than its failure to create a new Singaporean identity for Singapore's Muslim community that would eclipse and supercede their unique Muslim identity. The glorious fast of *Ramadān* has played, and continues to play, a crucial role in ensuring that failure.



Link with Sex and Chastity

In their month-long retreat during the fast of *Ramadān* Muslims are specifically permitted, as we noted earlier, to engage in sexual relations with their wives during the night which follows the day of fasting. This union of husband and wife during the nights of *Ramadān* injects a spiritual content into sexual relations and then elevates that spiritualized sex to a status worthy of participation in a spiritual retreat. What Islam achieves here is nothing less than revolutionary, for the satisfaction of the sexual needs of man have almost universally been held to be incompatible with his highest spiritual strivings. The religious mind through the ages has maintained an aloofness from sex-life which it has either held in contempt or reluctantly tolerated. Islam makes a break with the immediate past and works for the integration of man's sex life into the period of his most intense and sustained spiritual mobilization. In doing so it spiritualized the sex bond and established a philosophy of sex which is the *sine qua non* for the emancipation of woman in this modern age.

So long as sex is considered to be incompatible with man's



spiritual strivings, woman's status in society will always be problematic. Such a philosophy of sex, which excludes sexual life from the world of the sacred, and which recognizes no reality for woman beyond her material reality, eventually causes man to approach woman for the satisfaction of lust and base carnal passion. When so ever this occurs the mind creates an image of woman as a toy, a plaything, and an object to be used and abused; and herein lies the explanation for the continued exploitation of woman in the modern world. The feminist movement in the Western world seems to have completely overlooked this aspect of the problem.

As soon as sex is spiritualized, as it is in the fast of *Ramadān*, man approaches woman with *light* rather than *lust*. And in the flame of spiritual illumination sex attains a status which is truly sacred, a gift from Allah Most High through which a man and woman attain peace, tranquillity, intense pleasure and contentment and most important of all, a union and unity which facilitates the approach to The One. It is in this context that we can properly examine the statement of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*):

“Three (things) have been made dear to me (by Allah) in this world of yours – women, and fragrance (of perfume); and prayer has been the cooling of my eyes.”

(Ahmad and al-Nasa'i)

Shaikh Muhiyuddin Ibn ‘Arabi, in his famous work *Fusūs Al-Hikam*, comments on this saying of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi*



wa sallam) in some detail:

“Then Allah drew forth from him (namely man) a being in his (i.e., man’s) own image, called woman, and because she appears in his own image, man feels a deep longing for her, as something yearns for itself ... Thus women were made beloved to him”⁴

Ibn ‘Arabi also directs our attention to woman as medium in which, and through which, man can contemplate Allah Most High:

“When a man loves a woman, he seeks union with her, that is to say the most complete union possible in love. And there is in the elemental sphere no greater union than that between the sexes. It is precisely because such desire pervades all his parts that man is commanded to perform the major ablution (i.e., to take a bath after sexual intercourse). Thus the purification is total, just as his annihilation in her was total at the moment of consummation. Allah is jealous of His servant that he should find pleasure in any but Him, so He Purifies him by the ablution, so that he might once again behold Him in the one in whom he was annihilated, since it is none other than He whom he sees in her.”⁵

Indeed woman is the most perfect such medium, according to Ibn ‘Arabi:

“Contemplation of the Reality without formal support is not possible, since Allah in His Essence, is far beyond all



need of the Cosmos. Since, therefore, some form of support is necessary, the best and most perfect kind is the contemplation of Allah (Most High) in women.^{**}

It is important that we should note that the Prophet (sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) said: “*Three things have been made dear to me...*” He did not say: “*Three things did I love.*” The implication is that it was the Divine will which ordained that women be loved more than all else in the world. The reason, as Ibn Arabi explains, is that of all the *Ayāt* or signs of Allah Most High which exist in the world, woman is the closest *Ayah* of Allah to man. She is the closest “window” to heaven! Hence man should approach woman with the respect which is due to the sacred. And, through woman, he should seek to approach his Lord.

This is not to say that the celibate is incapable of spiritual progress. It is rather a view to the effect that in negating sex in order to pursue spiritual growth, man is, in fact, disregarding an in-built mechanism in his own nature which so balances the physical and the spiritual as to allow the one to contribute to the growth of the other.

Finally we may note that the spiritualization of sex, which is initiated in fasting, makes a significant impact on sexual morality since it establishes the firmest possible foundations for chastity. It is in the context of the permission to approach wives during the nights of *Ramadān* that the Qur’ān finds it appropriate to observe that:

﴿أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الْصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَاءِكُمْ هُنَّ لِيَاسٌ لَّكُمْ
 وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلَمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
 فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ بَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
 لَكُمْ وَكُلُّوْا وَأَشْرِبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَيْضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ
 مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصَّيَامَ إِلَى الْيَلَلِ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَذَّافُونَ
 فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرِبُوهُنَّ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُءَاءِ آيَتِهِ
 لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴾١٨﴾

“They (your wives) are apparel for you, and so are you for them.”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:187)

Thus when a husband goes to a woman other than his wife or wives for his sexual satisfaction, he deprives his wife of her clothing and thus subjects her to a certain kind of nakedness with all its attendant vulnerability and embarrassment. Chastity is an imperative for stable and happy family life. And this is the foundation of the stable family unit without which an enduring civilization cannot be established.



Link with Charity

In much the same way that the Qur'anic stamp of approval for sexual relations during the nights which follow the days of fasting leads to the spiritualization of sex and chastity, so too, does the Qur'anic exemptions from the compulsory fast for those who are ill or on a journey, permitting them to make up for the missed days after *Ramadān*, lead to a certain religious pragmatism, realism, and moderation. When religion ceases to be realistic and practical it soon loses its appeal to the masses. It is precisely for this reason that the Qur'ān comments, in the context of the exemptions:

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ
وَبَيْنَتِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهَدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلَيَصُمِّمْهُ وَمَنْ
كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلَتُكَبِّلُوا الْعِدَّةَ
وَلَتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَنَكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾ ١٨٥



“Allah intends ease for you: He does not want to subject you to difficulty.”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:185)

Those, on the other hand, who are permanently incapable of fasting either because of the nature of their illness or because of the disabilities of old age, are permitted to feed the poor in lieu of fasting. And this reference to charity brings us to the social dimension of fasting. *Ramadān* is the month when Allah Most High is most charitable to His creatures. Thus the Prophet (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) is reported to have said:

“Arfaja said: We were with ‘Utbah ibn Farqad while he was discussing Ramadān. A companion of the Prophet entered upon the scene. When ‘Utbah saw him, he became shy and stopped talking. The man [the companion] spoke about Ramadān, saying “I heard the Messenger of Allah say during Ramadān: “The gates of Hell are closed, the gates of Paradise are opened, and the devils are in chains. An angel calls out : ‘O you who intend to do good deeds, have glad tidings. O you who intend to do evil, refrain, until Ramadān is completed.”

(Ahmad and Nasa’i)

Indeed during *Ramadān*:

“...some are freed from the Hell by Allah Most High, and that happens every night.”

(Tirmidhi)



This generosity and charity from above also found expression in the life of the Prophet (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) who, according to Ibn Abbas (*radiallahu ‘anhu*),

“When the month of Ramadān began, set every prisoner free and gave to every beggar.”

As a consequence, spending freely of one's substance in charity is an integral part of the institution of fasting in Islam. It is significant that the compulsory fast of *Ramadān* was not promulgated by the Qur'ān until the Muslims had migrated from Makkah and had settled themselves as an organized community in Madinah. This was so precisely because fasting in Islam is not a strictly private affair but has a social function to perform in alleviating the condition of the poor, the destitute, the under-privileged, and the weak in the society. So integral is this care for the poor and needy to the religious way of life that the Qur'ān considers its neglect to be a repudiation of religion:

﴿أَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَدِّبُ بِاللَّيْلِينَ ١ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ
الْإِيمَانَ ٢ وَلَا يُحُصُّ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ٣ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّيْنَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ٤ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُوْنَ ٥
وَيَنْعِمُوْنَ الْمَاعُونَ ٦﴾

“Have you observed the one who repudiates religion? Such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness) and encourages not the feeding of the

indigent. So woe to the worshipers who are neglectful of their prayers. Those who want (but) to be seen (of men) but refuse (even) small kindnesses.”

(Qur’ān, al-Ma’ūn 107:1-7)

It should be clear that the institution of fasting in Islam makes a vitally important contribution to Islam’s championing of that noble cause. Indeed what Islam accomplishes in the institution of fasting is nothing less than the spiritualization of charity, for this is the implication of the linking of charity with fasting.

The momentum generated in the month of *Ramadān* in respect of the spiritualization of charity, is enhanced at no less a place than the House of Allah itself (the Kaaba in Makkah), when during *Hajj* and *Umrah*, the pilgrim who is forced by illness to shave his hair before the completion of the rites, is required to compensate for this either by fasting or by feeding the poor (Qur’ān, al-Baqarah 2:196). Thus even in the House of Allah Himself, fasting and charity have the same status.

In a contemporary world in which European ‘aid’ as a form of imperialism and a weapon of enslavement is so common, Islam’s spiritualization of charity is sorely needed. (See John Perkins book: ‘*Confessions of an Economic Hitman*’.)



Link with Human Rights, Freedom and Dignity

The Qur'ān states that the Divine compensation which is exacted for accidental homicide by a Muslim of a Muslim includes *freeing of a believing slave* or, for those who find this beyond their means, *fasting for two months*.

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَن يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَاً وَمَن قَاتَ مُؤْمِنًا
خَطَا فَتَحِيرُ رَقْبَةَ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسْلَمَةٌ إِلَيْهِ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَن
يَصْكِدُهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحِيرُ رَقْبَةَ
مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مَيْتَقٌ فَدِيَةٌ
مُسْلَمَةٌ إِلَيْهِ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحِيرُ رَقْبَةَ مُؤْمِنَةٍ فَمَن لَمْ يَرِدْ
فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
حَكِيمًا ﴾ ١٢

“And it is not conceivable that a believer should slay another believer, unless it be by mistake. And upon him



who has slain a believer by mistake there is the duty of freeing a believing soul from bondage and paying an indemnity to the victim's relations, unless they forgo it by way of charity. Now if the slain, while himself a believer, belonged to a people who are at war with you, [the penance shall be confined to] the freeing of a believing soul from bondage; whereas, if he belonged to a people to whom you are bound by a covenant, [it shall consist of] an indemnity to be paid to his relations in addition to the freeing of a believing soul from bondage. And he who does not have the wherewithal shall fast [instead] for two consecutive months. (This is) the atonement ordained by Allah: and Allah is indeed all-Knowing, Wise.”

(Qur'ān, al-Nisā', 4:92)

Hence the freeing of slaves is invested with a special degree of spirituality in Islam since it is equivalent in status to prolonged fasting. This is an achievement of great significance indeed for it permits the process of the dismantling of the institution of slavery to proceed in a manner which ensures the full rehabilitation of the freed slaves.

The negative after-effects of slavery and, in particular, the damage to the human personality, are still very visible in the western hemisphere more than a century after the abolition of slavery in Western civilization. The descendants of freed slaves in the United States of America are yet to be successfully integrated into the American society. The explanation of this pathetic situation lies in the fact that slavery was abolished in



response to basically economic compulsions with no effort whatsoever to restore the slave's humanity, human rights and human dignity. Western critics of Islam would hasten to scurry around searching for whatever can be used to conceal or distort the noble words of Prophet Muhammad (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) when he ordered:

"Give your slave to eat from what you eat, and give him clothes to wear which you wear."

(Bukhari)

Humanitarianism appears to have played a minor role in the whole affair. No evidence exists of any significant spiritual motivation in the dismantling of the institution of slavery in western civilization. (See the excellent work of Dr. Eric Williams, entitled *Capitalism and Slavery*.)

We wish to suggest that this is the basic reason why western civilization has been able to live with, or at least to tolerate Western-imposed *apartheid* on the soil of the very continent from which the West enriched itself by enslaving a free people. In other words, *apartheid* is a manifestation of the spiritual bankruptcy of secular western civilization.

In India, on the other hand, the caste system imposes a very real form of slavery on millions of people in that hapless country. It is of crucial importance to note that there is a form of colour discrimination which is involved in the caste system. The fair-skinned Aryan is never at the bottom of the social order. That is reserved for the dark-skinned indigenous



Indians. Although the caste system has been denounced by many great Hindu spiritual and religious leaders and Hindu reform movements, as well as being made illegal by the Indian constitution, it continues to survive and to impose terrible sufferings on low caste and casteless Hindus to this day. In Christianity as in Hinduism, there appears to be no basic linkage between fasting on the one hand, and the recognition of human freedom and dignity on the other. And it is the consequent inability to mobilize the spiritual consciousness and bring it to bear on such social problems as caste in India, *apartheid* in South Africa, and the integration of the descendants of freed slaves into American society which explains the continued existence of these manifestations of social cancer.

Islam's basic achievement really lies in the functional linkage it has established between fasting, on the one hand, and charity, chastity and recognition of human freedom and dignity, on the other. The one envelops the others in a spiritual embrace of profound practical consequences.

When Muslims were ruled by those who lived lives faithful to Islam, one could not distinguish in Muslim society between the ex-slave and those who had never been enslaved. Freed slaves were integrated into Muslim society to such an extent that an ex-slave sometimes rose to become ruler of the Muslims.

It is only in this evil age of the ascendancy of a Zionist Judeo-Christian alliance which has taken control of the world



through modern western civilisation, that Muslims are subjected to rulers who rule over them on behalf of their enemies. As a consequence Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia can boast of their high standard of living that rests on the foundations of slave wages. Indonesian maids who are paid the wages of a slave, and Bangladeshi, Filipino, Indonesian and Pakistani labourers who also work for slave wages, now blot the fair face of Islam.



Between the Two Nights

The *Mi'raj* or ascension of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) to the special Divine presence has historically been recognized to have taken place on Rajab 27. This date appears to be linked in the Islamic calendar to *Ramadān* 27, the likely day of the “night of power,” or the *Lailatul Qadr*. It seems that this period of two months is a special season in which the collective spirituality is progressively enhanced until finally the individual effort of even the average worshiper elevates him to eligibility for some form of religious experience. This, in turn, launches him on a path of spiritual growth.

The progressive enhancement begins on Rajab 27, when the worshiper refreshes his memory about the Prophet's *Mi'rāj* and reminds himself that the five daily prayers (*Salāt*) which were brought down from above in the *Mi'rāj*, is the vehicle for his personal *Mi'rāj*. He thus pays serious attention to improving the quality of his *Salāt*. This involves, most of all, developing a devout frame of mind.

In the month of *Shabān* he follows the example of the Prophet (*sallalahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and fasts time and again to build



the momentum with which to prepare the body and the mind for the rigors of the fast of *Ramadān*. Thus the preliminary fast of *Shabān* is added to (*Salāt*) and worship moves into a higher gear. On *Ramadān* 1, not only does the compulsory fast for all adult Muslims begin but, also, there is *Qiyām al-Lail* or the prayers of the night-vigil, when long passages of the Qur’ān are recited. Fasting, the night time prayer vigil and the recitation of the Qur’ān have a dramatic impact in effecting a substantial qualitative improvement of worship.

When, on *Ramadān* 21, the withdrawal from worldly affairs and seclusion in the *Masjid* (*I’tikāf*) for ten days commences, the worshipers reach a pitch or intensity of worship which makes this period most spiritually conducive for religious experience. As he withdraws from the *Dunya* the veils begin to fall from off his eyes and heart and as a consequence he now perceives the reality of things and of the world.

Finally comes *Ramadān* 27, the *night of power* (*Lailatul Qadr*) when Allah Most High sends down the angels and Gabriel for every errand:

﴿نَزَّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِم مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ﴾

“...In hosts descend in it the angels, bearing divine inspiration by their Sustainer’s leave; from all [evil] that may happen...;”

(Qur’ān, al-Qadr, 97:4)

i.e., to bestow, perhaps, the supreme gift of *Mi’rāj* (i.e. a direct



visionary experience of the unseen worlds) to all those who have deserved it or who have earned it.

When the Qur'ān asserts that the *night of power* is superior to a thousand months:

﴿لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ﴾

“The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months.”

(Qur'ān, al-Qadr, 97:3)

the implication is, perhaps, that the direct visionary experience of the unseen worlds which can best be experienced on that night is better than an entire life-span (a thousand months standing for an average life-span) lived without it.

There are profound psychological and sociological lessons to be learnt from Islam's fast of *Ramadān*. The enhanced collective spirituality of *Ramadān*, for example, literally reaches down to embrace even the weakest of the believers and to assist and strengthen their resolve to observe the fast.

Secondly, with the institution of the fast of *Ramadān* and its attendant charity, prayers, and the recitation of the Qur'ān, Islam takes the believer to the third stage of the process of religious development, the stage of total conformity and harmony with the externally imposed sacred law.

In the first stage, we should recall, the individual was



invited to enter into Islam and to submit publicly to the Truth. In the second stage, on the other hand, the process witnessed the internalization of the externally proclaimed belief. This was the stage of faith or *Imān*. With the achievement of stage three or *al-Ihsān*, and with the possible vision of the unseen worlds, the believer now acquires the capacity to see with the internal eye what previously could not be seen. Thus it is that the Fast of *Ramadān* delivers the capacity for internal intuitive spiritual insight with which to penetrate the reality of things and not to be deceived by appearance. Such a capacity constitutes a vital dimension of power.



Fasting and the Physical Body

We eat and drink for energy, which we then burn up when working or playing. When we generate greater amounts of energy than we actually use we then end up with excess energy and this is stored in the body as fat. There are two ways through which we can get rid of fat, and that is either by rigorous exercise which burn up a lot of energy rapidly, or by fasting. When we fast we still need energy to meet our daily requirements. When the source of energy through food and drink is limited the body uses its stored energy. In this way we get rid of excess fat.

By reducing or eliminating excess body fat every year during the fast of *Ramadān* fasting makes an important contribution to physical health. It should be obvious, however, that this elimination of excess fat will not be achieved if one fasts for the whole day and then, at the time of breaking the fast, eats three times as much food as one would normally eat. In fact this overeating after a long day of fasting can have a distinctly negative impact on health.

The human body, like a motor car, needs to be serviced at



regular intervals. By changing spark plugs, points, condenser, oil, oil filter, etc. and then “tuning” the engine, the car works better and more efficiently. There is, in addition, an increase in the life of the car. Similarly, the human body needs to be serviced and Islam achieves the servicing of the body during the fast of *Ramadān*. While fasting, a number of bodily organs (particularly the digestive organs) are rested and thus serviced. This servicing restores human health and increases man’s longevity.

Physical strength cannot be sustained without good health, and fasting is essential for the maintenance and the preservation of good health. Indeed fasting helps in the cure of many illnesses! The question is: Does Islam establish a link between physical strength and power? And the answer is: Yes, it does! When the Israelites questioned the Divine choice of Saul (or *Talūt*) as their king on the grounds that he was not a man of wealth, Allah Most High responded and pointed out that Saul was eligible for the status conferred upon him because he possessed knowledge and (physical) strength:

﴿ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ تَبَّعِيهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَائُولَتَ مَلِكًا
 قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ
 يُؤْتَ سَعْكَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَصْطَفَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ
 بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجَسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِ مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ﴾



وَأَنَّهُ وَسِعَ عَلِيهِمْ

٢٤٧

“And their prophet said unto those elders: “Behold, now Allah has raised up Saul to be your king.” They said: “How can he have dominion over us when we have a better claim to dominion than he, and he has not [even] been endowed with abundant wealth?” [The prophet] replied: “Behold, Allah has exalted him above you, and endowed him abundantly with knowledge and bodily perfection. And Allah bestows His dominion upon whom He wills: for Allah is infinite, all-Knowing.”

(Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:247)



Fasting and Creativity

In order to realize his potential, man must achieve in his life-pattern a balance between continuity and change. As soon as he becomes stuck in a permanent syndrome of routine and habits, he shuts out from his life fresh and new vistas, and that expansion of the mind and the spirit which exists within him as a potential realization. A temporary change from daily routine to something different can release creative energy, refresh the mind, and restore strength and vitality to a body which may have become tired and stuck in a daily routine.

In the fast of *Ramadān* the believer experiences just such a change. The change is effected in the realm of man's biological existence and interferes with the daily routine in respect of food, drink and sex. The change is so fundamental, so disruptive of daily routine, that the believer lives a different life in *Ramadān*. This movement from routine not only refreshes the body and restores vitality but, more importantly, releases creative forces with the potential of penetrating worlds that were hitherto inexperienced and unexplored by the believer, worlds which transcend his normal experience.

Sharing Hunger with the Destitute

Abstinence from food and drink from dawn to sunset forces on the believer the personal experience of hunger and thirst. In the crucible of personal experience he learns of that suffering which the poor and destitute must bear. As a consequence of the acquisition of that understanding of poverty, the believer's heart and mind is opened for the development of greater sympathy for the poor and greater feelings of charity, kindness, and generosity. And these surely are virtues which lift men and societies to honour and greatness in the march of history.



Fasting and the Value of Food

Abstinence from food and drink form dawn to sunset and the consequent experience of the pangs of hunger and thirst impresses upon the consciousness of the believer the value of food and drink. Food and drink or sustenance is not a thing to be taken for granted, not a thing to be wasted. Rather it is providence (*Rizq*) and hence sacred. The spirituality generated during the long day of fasting invests the food and drink with which the fast is broken with what can most appropriately be termed *sacramental* value.

Respect for food and drink in turn protects one from the abuse of food and drink – as well as over – indulgence in either or both. That the world is in need of proper respect for food is demonstrated year after year in some of the most affluent countries in the world where food is destroyed in order to prevent prices from tumbling in a market which is over-supplied.⁷



The Last Word

The *Ummah* of the Prophet (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) is in a very sorry state today. Despite the Divine command to build power to the maximum extent possible the *Ummah* is weak and helpless, as weak, helpless and vulnerable as it was in Makkah. At that time the Prophet (*sallalahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*) led the community, with Allah’s help, to that state of power with which they succeeded in defeating the enemy at Badr.

Today’s *Ummah* has a primary obligation to restore power! There is no other subject more important to Muslims today than the restoration of power, that power which can function as an effective deterrent to the enemy, which can be used for responding to aggression and for liberating the oppressed and tyrannized, and through which the Truth can be seen more clearly by mankind to be Truth. These are the functions of power as established in various ayaat of the Qur’ān. If that power is not restored then the consequence for the world of Islam will be more Bosnias, Kashmirs, and Palestines. There will be universal *Fasād* (corruption and disarray) on earth and the misery will fall on all, not just on the guilty:



﴿ فَهَزَّ مُؤْمِنِينَ اللَّهُ وَقَاتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَأَتَكَهُ اللَّهُ
 الْمُلَكَ وَأَنْجَحَكُمَّةَ وَعَلَمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفَعَ اللَّهُ
 النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ
 دُوْلَةُ قَضَى عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ ٥١

By Allah's will they routed them; and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed. And had not Allah checked one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds.

(Qur'ān, al-Baqarah, 2:251)

The Muslims, however, will face the brunt of the suffering. To avert that fate which is already at our doorstep, we need to restore power.

We learn from the *Seerah* that the foundations of power must first be established before we can actually take the battlefield. This is the significance of the thirteen years in Makkah, the *Hijrah*, and the first year in Madinah. *The foundations of power are freedom, knowledge, values, faith, unity and fraternity, leadership, and discipline.* A study of the main points made in this paper reveal that the institution of the collective fast of *Ramadān* makes a significant contribution towards developing and sustaining *all* those foundations of power, - but



most of all internal freedom.

Our appeal to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual guides of the contemporary Ummah is to direct urgent attention to the following:

1. Articulate the relationship between fasting and *power*; why else, indeed, did Allah Most High delay the promulgation of the new *Shari'ah* regarding fasting until just before the first *Ramadān* in Madinah?
2. Work for the recognition of the strategic input which the fast of *Ramadān* is supposed to make in the development of *power*; this input being located in the development of values, in winning inner freedom, in facilitating the penetration of the transcendental foundations of knowledge, in strengthening faith, in uniting the community, in developing a life of self-discipline, etc.
3. Mobilize Muslims in such a way that the fast of *Ramadān* may actually result in that input for *power* being achieved individually and collectively which may then find concrete expression on the battlefield of *Jihād* as Islām responds to barbaric oppression in the Holy Land in particular. *Āmīn!*



Notes

¹ It is interesting to observe that after the opening chapter of the Holy Qur’ān, which is itself named ‘Opening Chapter’, the next chapter is entitled the Chapter of the ‘Cow’. While the choice of this name is linked to the worship of the cow in Jewish history which is found in the chapter (Qur’ān, al-Baqarah, 2:67-71), it also has great significance for Hindus who consider the cow to be a holy animal. Now the choice of the cow, which performs the wondrous feat of eating grass and producing milk, as a holy animal, can be considered to have been a preliminary step in the evolution of the religious copiousness, leading eventually to the recognition of *all* animals as sacred. Similarly the choice of the Ganges as a holy river and Bharat as a holy land would lead eventually to the recognition of *everything* in this universe as holy and sacred. And this is a position which can only truly be sustained with the recognition of the world as real and as Allah’s creation. Secondly, the world and all it contains must be recognized to be functioning as a medium which leads the developed religious consciousness to Allah Most High. And this, of course,



is the position of Islam itself which embraces a spiritual interpretation of the universe, a universe which overflows with the ‘Signs of Allah’ (the *Ayāt Allah*). And the Signs of Allah Most High lead directly to Allah Himself.

² David is mentioned in the Bible as having fasted for seven days (Samuel 12:16-17). Moses fasted in order to show gratitude to Allah for the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh and also for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29). Jesus Christ not only kept fasts but also commanded his followers to fast (Mathew 6:15-17, Luke 5:33-35, Acts 13:23). May Allah’s blessings be upon them all.

³ Muslims, indeed, are so fond of reciting the Qur’ān while fasting that the writer was amazed when, as a young student just arrived in Cairo, he found so many people reciting the Qur’ān while traveling in crowded buses to work in the mornings of *Ramadān*. Some, in fact, were standing in those packed buses with one hand clasping the Qur’ān and the other holding the rail.

⁴ Ibn Arabi., *The Bezels of Wisdom*, translated by R.W.J. Austin (London: SPCK, 1980) p. 274

⁵ Ibid., p. 274

⁶ Ibid., p. 275

⁷ Even among Muslims the respect for food is now sometimes lacking which is a thing unknown in the past in Islamic civilization. The writer recalls with horror the spectacle of



Arab students dining in the common hall of the Karachi University Student Hostels and, upon the completion of their meal, wiping their hands clean with the soft flat bread which was prepared for their meals. In addition there are restaurants in the Muslim world which now have to put up notices warning customers that they would be fined if they waste food.